

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
2163 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

April 2, 2004

VOTE "NO" ON THE KENNEDY "FAST" AMENDMENT

Dear Colleague:

We urge you to oppose the Kennedy "FAST" amendment. The Kennedy amendment proposes to eliminate three programs included in H.R. 3550, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) that are dedicated to reducing congestion and testing the introduction of tolls on the Interstate: the Congestion Pricing Program and two tolling pilot programs.

With the two tolling pilot programs – one for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of existing Interstate highways, and the other for the construction of new Interstate highways – TEA-LU adopts a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to introducing tolls on our Nation's Interstates. Interstate highways are constructed using taxpayer dollars paid into the Highway Trust Fund and charging tolls on these highways is a radical departure from current practice. Simply put, charging a toll on an Interstate highway is taxing drivers twice: once when they pay at the pump and again when they pay the toll. While we have serious congestion problems in this country that need to be addressed, we should not undertake this change lightly.

That is why TEA-LU takes a structured approach to tolling by establishing pilot programs to allow tolls on a limited number of Interstate facilities, to be chosen by the Secretary of Transportation. These programs are specifically designed to ease congestion and include important equity protections. Further, they provide necessary safeguards against a higher incidence of traffic accidents and injuries due to traffic spilling onto state and local roads adjacent to the toll facilities.

In contrast to this approach, the Kennedy amendment would allow tolls on an unlimited number of highways across the country. Instead of approaching tolls as one part of a multifaceted solution to the problem of congestion, the amendment envisions tolls as the primary way to pay for new, additional road lanes. Further, under the Kennedy amendment, tolls could not be used to rehabilitate existing highways, instead the amendment only allows tolling to add more lanes to existing highways, whatever the consequences. Imagine toll facilities erected on every highway across America and the public being charged greater and greater tolls just to drive on their own roads!

Cross-country tolling is not the future for this country. We urge you to support the Committee's multifaceted approach to these issues. We urge you to vote "NO" on the Kennedy amendment.

Sincerely,



James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



William O. Lipinski
Ranking Democratic Member
Subcommittee on Highways,
Transit and Pipelines